

Advisory for Backyard Poultry Production

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Backyard poultry production is a low input business characterized by indigenous night shelter, scavenging system, natural hatching of chicks, low productivity (70-80 eggs per bird/year) of birds with little or no supplementary feeding, local marketing and no health care practice. Eggs and meat produced from rural farming will fetch high premium prices.

- Multi-colored, light weight, dual purpose (egg and meat) birds that tolerate summer and winter, disease resistance and survive on scavenging feeding.
- Pure desi breeds like Aseel, Kadaknath or improved rural varieties like Kaveri, Vanaraja, Giriraja, Srinidhi, Gramapriya, Rajasri, are best suitable for backyard farming.
- The selected breeds/varieties should be more suited to the locality and consumer's preference.
- Birds of superior quality breeding stocks (male and females in 1:8 ratio) could be obtained from recognized CPDO or State Animal Husbandry farms.
- Protect the birds from the attack of stray dogs or wild animals and human's theft by constructing low cost cheaply available material based night shelter (at least 60cm height).
- Newly hatched chicks need artificial heat particularly during rainy and winter seasons.
- Brooder space of 7-10 sq. inches is recommended per chick and need good ventilation.
- Optimum temperature of 37°C in first week and should be reduced by 2°C per week up to 8 weeks of age (2 watts/chick).
- Floor spacing for 10-15 adult birds should of 2.0×1.0 m. The space requirement per bird will vary with the age of the birds; up to 4 weeks – 0.5sq.ft; 4-8 weeks – 1.0 sq. ft.; >8 weeks: 2.0 sq. ft.
- Bedding materials like saw dust and paddy husk should be spread to a length of 5 cm depending upon their availability and cost.
- The bedding material should be free from fungus and it should be stirred at frequent intervals to prevent caking and ammonia smell.
- Minimum 14 days gap should be followed between two batches with proper cleaning of shed.
- Feeding scratch-cracked corn and oats alone does not supply all the bird's nutritional needs.
- Free ranging adult birds, should be fed with 35g feed/bird/day during evening hours.
- Laying birds should also be fed with calcium in the form of shell grit/stone grit or cracked egg shells.
- Under fully confined rearing system, an adult native bird requires about 80g feed/day i.e. roughly one kg concentrate feed for 13 birds.

- Based on the availability, earth worm, flies, insects, etc. could be fed to the birds as they meet their protein requirements and also improve their growth rate.
- The birds also pick and eat the ticks in cattle or sheep body and act as a biological control.
- Feeding of home grown Azolla to the birds will allow to meet the bird's protein requirement.
- Feed consumption increase in winter and decrease in summer season.
- Farmer's can prepare their own feed using the locally available grains and other ingredients as follows:

Grains (maize/rice/wheat/jowar/sorghum)	– 34.8 kg
Oil seed cake (groundnut/soybean)	– 31 kg
Bran (deoiled/wheat)	– 33 kg
Calcite	– 0.5 kg
Salt	– 0.5 kg
Minerals	– 0.1 kg (100g)
Vitamins	– 0.1 kg (100g)
Total	– 100 kg

- Regular culling of unhealthy, unproductive and diseased birds is essential for farm productivity.
- Feeders, waterers, egg trays and feed bags must be thoroughly washed with disinfectant and sun dried.
- The disinfectant should be used with right dilution as per manufacture's direction.
- Periodic deworming and vaccination against common diseases should be followed to protect the birds from Ranikhet Disease (RD), fowl pox, infectious coryza and parasitic load.
- The vaccination for Ranikhet disease should be done at 5, 28, and 70th day of age and repeat after every 6 months. For fowl pox vaccinate at 6th week of age.
- The presence of external fleas in the body should be removed by regular bathing with butox.
- Among the backyard birds, feather picking cannibalism is common. It can be avoided by giving good amount of protein, more space and removing the fleas.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and other government financial institutions under NLM project are supporting for establishment of mother units and hatcheries required for rural poultry farming.

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